

Testimony on House Bills 4476 and 4183
Autism Spectrum Disorder
House Health Policy Committee
June 9, 2009

Representative Corriveau and members of the House Health Policy Committee:

I am writing to you on behalf of the Michigan Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers. The Chapter represents about 7,500 licensed social workers who work with Michigan's most vulnerable citizens in many different work settings. A number of our members provide clinical services to children with mental and behavioral health needs across the full range of mental health issues, including autism spectrum disorder. It is with this perspective that I am writing to encourage the House Health Policy Committee to support passage of the mental health parity bills, House Bills 4597 – 4600.

The parity bills take the incremental step of providing mental and behavioral health coverage on par with medical coverage for the greatest number of people needing those services, including those with autism spectrum disorder. As caring and concerned social workers, NASW-MI Chapter members cannot support the provision of special guaranteed treatment for those with one particular disorder or set of disorders without providing parity of services to those who are suffering from other equally serious and debilitating, but treatable, disorders. We cannot discriminate against some of the populations we serve. We must do whatever we can to help everyone who needs mental and behavioral services. Ideally, supporters of the autism bills and the mental health parity bills can collaborate on legislation that would allow for the best mental health care for all Michigan citizens. NASW-MI would be happy to work with the Committee and the supporters and sponsors of the autism bills to accomplish this very worthwhile goal.

Thank you for considering my request.

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